

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Family Services
Adoption Unit**

**Announces An Application For Funding For
Adoption Support Services**

Deadline: September 1, 2005 at 3:00pm

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose and intent of this Request for Application (RFA) is to award one grant to a public local department of social services or private non-profit licensed child placing agency in Virginia for the management of a post-legal adoption services delivery system under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Funds for adoption services under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program are intended to provide adoption support and preservation services to families that adopt children with special needs who were in Virginia's foster care system.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are local departments of social services in Virginia and licensed child placing agencies in Virginia.

Responsibilities of Selected Sub-grantees

- Agree to the terms set forth in the Request for Application (an affirmative statement in a cover letter ensuring compliance with the Special Terms and Conditions and the General Terms and Conditions will suffice for those sections).
- Attend meetings with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) as required by the VDSS.

Funding Available and Grant Period

A total of \$1,000,000 is available. The sub-grant is funded on a competitive basis and only the application demonstrating a multifaceted best practice model will be funded. A minimum of 10% cash or in-kind match is required. No other federal funds may be used as part of this match. Applicants must not use local, state, or other federal funds already being used for other matching purposes. The application must provide sufficient certification in the application that the matching funds are eligible and consistent with the guidelines given. The funding period for the sub-grant for the first year will be October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006. The sub-grant may be renewed for four full subsequent funding years through September 30, 2010.

How to Apply

Applicants requesting funding must submit two originals and five (5) copies of the Adoption Support Services Application **no later than 3:00pm on September 1, 2005**. The applications should be addressed to Pamela Fitzgerald Cooper, Virginia Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services, Permanency Unit, 7 North Eighth Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23219-3301. Applications received after

the deadline will not be considered. **E-mailed or faxed applications will not be considered.**

Additional Information

Copies of this sub-grant application, including the necessary sub-grant application forms and instructions, may be downloaded from the DSS website <http://www.dss.state.va.us>. Sub-grant award notices will also be posted on this website.

If you have additional questions regarding the sub-grant application material or process, please contact:

Pamela F. Cooper
Pamela.cooper@dss.virginia.gov
804-726-7575
7 North Eighth Street
Richmond, VA 23219

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

Program Overview

The purpose of this Adoption Support Services Application is for the management and expansion of the Virginia Department of Social Services' Adoptive Family Preservation Services System (AFP). The Adoptive Family Preservation Services System provides services to adoptive families throughout Virginia. The first priority for services under this system is services to children adopted from a local department of social services, however, services may be extended to any adoptive family that resides in Virginia as long as funding is available.

Virginia's adoption program is faced with a number of challenges and opportunities. In 1997, Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). ASFA was passed in response to growing dissatisfaction with state child welfare systems in achieving the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families. Although the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) introduced the notion of permanency planning for children in foster care, the process to achieve permanency was a linear one. With the linear process, children often remained in foster care for long periods of time waiting for the birth family to remedy the conditions that led to the child's removal.

ASFA significantly changed the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) benchmark legislation that emphasized securing permanent families for children. ASFA shortened the time required to reach permanency. Permanency hearings are now held at 14 months and petitions for termination of parental rights must be filed at the permanency planning hearing, unless there is a compelling reason not to terminate parental rights. For children who had been in foster care 17 of the most recent 24 months, ASFA required expedited termination of parental rights, unless compelling reasons existed. As a result of these changes, the number of children with the goal of adoption in Virginia's foster care system remains higher now than it was prior to the passage of ASFA in 1997. It is clear that collaborative strategies are necessary to achieve maximum implementation of ASFA and ensure that children achieve permanency in a timely manner.

ASFA further opened the door to a federal funding stream for the provision of post legal adoption services. Years of experience in adoptions has led to a cascade of changes, including the redefinition of "adoptable child". Agencies have become increasingly sophisticated about finding families that will adopt children with a multiplicity of needs. Adoptive placement, once viewed as an ending, is now viewed as a beginning. Adoption professionals and others now recognize that adoptive families need a variety of services long after the adoption is finalized. Adoption support and preservation services must be available for all adoptive families who need them, regardless of the age or special needs of the child when adopted.

Children who have experienced abuse or neglect and the loss of a family pose greater challenges, including many of the issues that adoptive families may not confront until years after the finalization of the adoption. Therefore, to ensure the successes of the adoptions of children from foster care, we must develop programs and have services available that recognize and effectively meet the lifelong needs of the members of the adoption triad. Adoption promotion and support are closely intertwined. When a family knows that adoption sensitive services will be available to them after their adoption is legally finalized, they are more likely to consider and proceed with adopting children with special needs.

In March 2000, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched a new approach to monitoring state child welfare programs. The new approach, Child and Family Services Reviews, focuses on assessing each state's capacity to create and achieve positive, measurable outcomes for children. The reviews include state adoption programs, and are based upon compliance with the requirements of ASFA. Each state was measured against national performance standards, one of which is the length of time for children with the goal of adoption to achieve that goal. The national standard Virginia is expected to meet is that 32 percent of the children leaving foster care through a finalized adoption will have achieved adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Self-Assessment from Fiscal Year 2000 data showed that 17 percent of Virginia's foster children achieved adoption within 24 months. Although more recent data shows the percentage has increased to 20 percent, clearly more work must be done to meet the national standard and ensure more timely adoptions for all children in foster care.

In addition to the mandate to complete adoptions more timely, the caseloads in local departments of social services workers remain high. According to the Child Welfare League of America, a worker responsible for adoption services should carry no more than 12 cases at any one time. The average number of cases carried by local department workers is significantly higher than the recommended caseload for special needs adoption. Added to the high caseload is the fact that many local workers have responsibility for more than just adoption, prohibiting them from dedicating all of their time to providing adoption services for children and adoptive families. The combination of these factors often results in inadequate preparation of the children and families making post-legal adoption services even more critical to prevent adoption dissolutions.

Program Requirements

The current Adoptive Family Preservation Services System is based on a model, developed by the National Consortium for Post Legal Adoption Service, which defines four guiding principles. These guiding principles underpin a competent adoption support and preservations service system. They also recognize the impact of adoption on families and serve to facilitate an appropriate interdisciplinary response to the ongoing needs of the adoptive family:

- *Families created by adoption are different from families created by birth.* Adoption creates special circumstance which families, professionals and society need to validate and address for the healthy development of the adoptive family.
- *Adoption is a life long experience.* As a life long experience, adoption presents unique opportunities and challenges for families and communities based on: the history of the child; the developmental stages of the child and family; the supportive community network available to the family; and the adoption issues which affect integration of the child into the family.
- *Adoption is beneficial to parent, child and society.* Adoption provides positive rewards for the child, the family, the family's community, and society in general. The child is helped by becoming part of a stable, nurturing relationship within an adoptive family which allows the child to grieve past losses and build new attachments. The adoptive family benefits from the growth they experience in nurturing a child who otherwise may not have had a permanent, stable family. The community is enhanced by building strong, self-sufficient families, rather than expending resources to maintain children in public services systems such as juvenile justice and child welfare. Society at large benefits from adoption, the connecting of parents with children, and the consequent of social and economic contributions of both.
- *Society is responsible for providing support and preservation services to the adoptive family.* Society sanctions adoption through its concern for children, its policies and laws; therefore, society must actively support the adoptive family and provide a service network which takes into account the effects of adoption on the child and family. Society has a special obligation to families who have adopted children who were formerly in foster care and experienced abuse and neglect. Because of their multiple emotional needs, families who adopt these children need greater support than other families.

As the attached concept map illustrates, such supports and services should lead to: strengthened family integration, stronger attachments, better family functioning, parental entitlement and claiming, and identify formation of family members and community networks.

A post legal adoption services system model that embodies these concepts is imperative.

III. APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Local departments of social services and private child placing agencies licensed to do business in Virginia are eligible to apply for these funds. IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR SELECTION, APPLICANTS MUST SUBMIT THEIR PROPOSAL PACKAGE AND THE COMPLETE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS.

Applicants should be sensitive to the cultural, socio-economic and community influences which affect the development and functioning of families, as well as:

- Have knowledge of adoption as a life long process;
- Have established relationships and networks in place with other agencies providing services to families in the community they propose to serve;
- Provide assurances that project staff or a staff representative from the agency will attend adoption conferences and other adoption events sponsored by the VDSS.

Proposals shall be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant. All information requested must be submitted. Failure to submit all information requested may result in the proposal being considered non-responsive and therefore, rejected.

Proposals should be prepared concisely, providing a straight forward description of capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the RFA. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

Proposals must be typewritten and double spaced on 8 1/2" by 11" paper. All pages must be sequentially numbered beginning with Objective and Need for Assistance as page number one. Each copy of the proposal should be firmly bound in a single volume. All documentation submitted with the proposal should be bound in that single volume.

Specific Requirements

Return the complete RFA, signed and filled out as required.

Procedures for Applying: The project proposal shall not exceed sixty (60) pages and must adhere to the format described.

THE COVER PAGE must include the following information: title of the project, name and address of the agency, name and phone number of the contact person, licensing status (if appropriate). This page should contain a signed statement from the applicant's fiscal officer that the agency has sufficient funds to cover project expenses. Do not put additional information on this page. *This page does not count as one of the 60 pages.* The Cover Page is located in the Appendix Section of this document.

Proposal Abstract: Provide a one-page abstract of the proposal highlighting key elements regarding the model proposed, implementation plans, and organizational capability to manage this award. The summary description should accurately and concisely reflect the project proposed. It should describe the objectives of the project, the approaches to be used and the outcomes expected. The description should include a list of major products that will result from the proposed project such as materials, data collection instruments, training packages, or videos. *This page does not count toward the 60 page limit.*

Objectives and Need for Assistance:

Proposals must clearly identify the needs that are to be met. The need for assistance must be demonstrated and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included. Identify results and benefits to be derived. Each of the principle and subordinate objectives must be accompanied by the expected outcome. Each of the principle and subordinate objectives must have performance measures that show how the outcomes will be achieved.

Approach:

- A. Clearly describe the best practice model that will be used. Provide a detailed description of how each component of the project will be implemented. Identify how you plan to provide post legal services statewide. Include two (2) letters of support from different communities in which you will be working for the project.
- B. Describe fully the services that will be included in the process, and the methodology for providing services.
- C. Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary community involvement.
- D. Include a graphic model of the proposed service system.
- E. Identify the number of children and families to be served.

Organizational Capability and Structure:

- A. Give a history of your agency focusing on important activities and accomplishments in adoption over the last 5 years.
- B. Describe the "track record" of your organization and any previous or current experience in the provision of post legal adoption services.
- C. Describe any accreditation or other similar standards that your agency meets.
- D. Describe the organization and function of the board of directors and or any other internal governing bodies which would have some responsibility for this project.
- E. Describe the current total operating budget of your agency and its major programs. Indicate all public and private sources of funding.
- F. Describe your agency's prior experience and involvement in the community/region where contract activities will take place.
- G. Describe the competency of key project staff. Indicate whether current staff will be

used or whether new staff will be hired for the project. Provide assurances that project staff is culturally competent and adoption competent.

Evaluation Plan:

- A. The evaluation plan must provide measurable project outputs (quantity) and outcomes (quality) of services.
- B. The evaluation plan must utilize researched-based instruments, when practicable.
- C. The evaluation of outcomes must be based on the stated goals, objectives and activities.

Budget

The agency must submit a budget detailing expenditures related to the delivery of the services proposed. Agencies may use existing staff, hire additional staff, or contract with a person(s) on an as needed basis to provide services under this award. Budget forms should include costs for travel, conferences, and meetings associated with rendering services under this RFA.

A match of 10% is required. The match may be cash or in kind. Matching funds pledged to this grant cannot be used as match for any other funding source. The form, "Budget Summary – DSS Funds and Match Funds", must be used to show the source and type of your match funds. Include this with your other budget sheets.

When calculating the match, multiply the amount of the request by .10. Subtract the resulting amount from the amount of the total request to obtain the match amount. A program requesting \$100,000 would be required to provide a cash or in-kind match in the amount of \$11,111 ($\$100,000 / .90 = \$111,111$ less the \$100,000 requested amount, for a match totaling \$11,111). The non-VDSS share may be met by cash or in-kind contributions, although applicants are encouraged to meet their match contributions through cash contributions.

A budget narrative must be provided that describes how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity and reasonableness of the proposed costs.

Required Attachments - No page limit is specified for this section.

- 1. A statement or letter from the applicant's fiscal officer is required. This letter must certify that the agency has sufficient money to cover the project expenses as grant funds will be awarded on a cost reimbursable basis. The recipient agency must submit monthly expenditure statements to the VDSS for reimbursement.
- 2. If the applicant agency is a private non-profit agency, the following is required at the time the proposal is submitted:

- A. A copy of the applicant's Certificate of Incorporation or Certificate of Authority from the State Corporation Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia;
 - B. A copy of IRS form (s) certifying that the applicant's organization is exempted from federal income tax payment under Section 501 (c) (3) of the IRS code; and
 - C. The current fiscal year's operating budget and a statement of actual expenditures for the previous fiscal year (audited report), including a listing of the sources of funding for both budgets (i.e., Statement of Revenues and Expenditures).
3. A copy of the agency's confidentiality policy must be submitted by each applicant providing direct services.
 4. Letter(s) of support and other materials may be submitted as an appendix. This should be limited to documentation necessary to support the application.
 5. Assurances: An "Assurances form" is included in the forms section for the required assurances. The person who will serve as project administrator must sign this form.

IV. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. The sub-grantee shall submit an invoice monthly to the Department of Social Services, Adoption Unit.
2. The selected sub-grantee must complete quarterly progress reports due on the following days after the end of each quarter:

Quarters		Due
1	October 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005	January 15, 2006
2	January 1, 2006 – March 31, 2006	April 15, 2006
3	April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006	July 15, 2006
4	July 1, 2006- September 30, 2006	October 15, 2006

3. The sub-grantee agrees to provide any additional reports that the VDSS may request by written notice to the sub-grantee.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA: PROPOSALS WILL BE EVALUATED BY A REVIEW COMMITTEE USING THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

A Review Committee consisting of adoption professionals and VDSS staff will review proposals. The committee will reach group consensus and submit recommendations for funding to the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services.

Objectives and Need for Assistance – 15 Points

- The Objectives and Need for Assistance are clearly documented.
- Relevant data is provided to support need.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives of the project are clearly stated.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives are related to the need.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives are reasonable to achieve.
- Each principle objective and subordinate objective is accompanied by the expected outcome.
- Each principle objective and subordinate objective outcome is accompanied by an outcome measure.
- The overall goal and anticipated outcomes significantly contribute to the achievement of adoption for children in foster care.
- The overall goal and anticipated outcomes significantly contribute to decreasing the length of time a child remains in foster care.

Approach - 50 Points

- A clear, detailed description is provided of how each project component will be implemented.
- The services are fully described.
- The methodology for provision of services is provided and based on the existing model.
- Current initiatives in Virginia are integrated into the project.
- The project has unique and unusual features.
- Partnerships and collaboratives are clearly defined, and a letter of commitment from the partner agency is included.
- State of the art practices are incorporated in the approach to services.

Organizational Capability and Structure - 5 Points

- Applicant's history demonstrates important activities and accomplishments in adoption over the last 5 years.
- The applicant's "track record" of services and experience with adoptive families demonstrates sufficient knowledge and competency to implement this project.
- The applicant's agency/organization is well-governed, fiscally sound, and capable of administering this project.

- Agency described accreditation or standards met, if appropriate.
- The organization and function of the board of directors or any internal governing body which would have some responsibility for this project is described.
- The applicant's current total operating budget and major programs are described, indicating all public and private funding sources.

Agency Profile –10 Points

- The applicant has demonstrated capacity to develop effective working relationships with local agencies and diverse community groups.
- Geographic area to be served by project is identified, as well as the applicant's prior experience and involvement in that geographic area.
- The applicant has experience and involvement in the geographic locations in which services are to be provided.
- The applicant has knowledge of adoption as a life-long process
- Composition of the project staff and qualifications of key staff are described, and positions descriptions and resumes are included.
- All project staff understands the Multi-ethnic Placement Act, as revised (MEPA), and the provisions of ASFA.

Evaluation Plan – 10 Points

- The evaluation plan must provide measurable project outputs (quantity) and outcomes (quality) of services.
- The evaluation plan must utilize researched-based instruments, when practicable.
- The evaluation of outcomes must be based on the stated goals, objectives and activities.

Budget - 10 Points

- The budget is reasonable to meet the level of service described for each service component.
- The budget narrative is clear and reasonable.

VI. APPLICATION FORMS

- A. SUB-GRANT APPLICATION COVER SHEET
- B. BUDGET SUMMARY – DSS FUNDS AND MATCH FUNDS
- C. ITEMIZED BUDGET – SALARIES AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
- D. ITEMIZED BUDGET – MATCH DOCUMENTATION
- E. ASSURANCES
- F. GENERAL GRANT CONDITIONS AND ASSURANCES
- G. W-9